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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OUAGADOUGOU 000492

AF/W FOR EPLUMB, JHUTCHISON
NSC FOR KAREN O'DONNELL

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Burkina Faso: AF DAS Moss Meeting with Foreign Minister

11. (C) Summary. Foreign Minister Bassole told AF DAS Moss June 3 that Burkina Faso hoped to help organize an international conference to seek an overall solution to Tuareg unrest in the Sahel region; Moss, by contrast, advocated targeted diplomatic efforts, believing that there was no single solution. Moss felt Mali was willing to accept international help to address the Tuareg issue, while Niger viewed it as a domestic, criminal problem. Bassole and Moss expressed concern about instability in Guinea, were pleased that Presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire had been scheduled for November 30, and agreed that Burkina Faso -- as a non-permanent UN Security Council member -- should take a leading role in finding an African solution in Zimbabwe. End Summary.

Tuareg Problems in Mali and Niger:
Regional Conferences, and Algiers Accord

12. (C) Conferences Versus Targeted Diplomacy: Opening a June 3 meeting with visiting AF DAS Todd Moss, Foreign Minister Djibril Bassole said that Burkina Faso was trying to help its neighbors in the Sahel to find a solution to persistent Tuareg unrest. Burkina Faso discussed the situation with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and hoped to seek an overall solution to the Tuareg problems by helping to organize an international conference that would address regional drug and arms trafficking, trafficking in persons, and security problems for mining operations, as well as the impact of the food crisis and climate change. Participants would include ECOWAS countries as well as Algeria and Libya -- both of which have offered to host the conference. The GOBF intends to engage Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, ECOWAS Commission President, in the dialogue. Minister Bassole also mentioned two September meetings: one in Mali to address the Tuareg issue, and another in Niger with the UN to address problems of drugs and crime.

13. (C) Moss stated that the U.S. did not recommend a large-scale conference or summit, and that targeted diplomatic efforts would be more effective. There was no single solution to the Tuareg problem that affects all of the Sahel countries from Mauritania to the Sudan, he felt. Mali and Niger would have to find political solutions that addressed autonomy, shared resources, limits on military activity, cooperation between the central government and the Tuaregs, and also kept out terrorists.

14. (C) Mali: Moss stated the U.S. view that the Algiers Accord was the most appropriate framework for the negotiations in Mali. Bassole agreed the Accord was a good agreement, but felt that it did not address key problems including: the need for infrastructure development, decentralization, and issues of equality for the Tuaregs. Bassole added that the GOBF would like to encourage the Algerians to remain engaged in the process, and that international assistance was still relevant.

15. (C) Niger: Moss mentioned that, while Mali was willing to accept

international help to resolve these issues, Niger viewed the situation as a domestic, criminal issue and therefore resisted external assistance. Moss stated that the Niger Government's tactic would not be sustainable over the long term. Bassole agreed that the solution to the Tuareg problem in Niger would most likely involve a political dialogue leading to a peace settlement. President Mamadou Tandja could use a military option, but the Niger military does not have the means to enforce anything, Bassole felt.

¶6. (C) Moss stated that Bassole's assessment closely mirrored the U.S. evaluation of the situation, and observed that President Tandja's April speech in Niamey on the Tuareg issue was not at all conciliatory. He added that friends of Niger should encourage dialogue. If the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ) has a political agenda, it will become obvious. Moss also agreed that a military solution would not be effective.

¶7. (C) Moss stressed the importance of regional diplomacy, and said that if President Tandja were to be more flexible, he could be remembered after his term ended as a "man of peace." Moss said that it would not be advisable to amend the constitution to give Tandja additional time in office. Such a tactic would come at a high political cost for the government and would anger the opposition. It would also most likely allow the conflict to continue in its current state and increase radicalism.

Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe

¶8. (C) Guinea: Bassole said that the current Government must make concessions to calm the public, ensure successful elections, and

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address the current dissatisfaction among the military over pay issues. Bassole voiced his concern over the movement of mercenaries across Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. According to Bassole, there will be an emergency (ECOWAS) meeting on June 23 in Abuja to address the situation. Countries attending include Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Niger.

¶9. (C) Cote d'Ivoire: both the U.S. and Burkina Faso were pleased that elections had been scheduled for November 30. Bassole added that the November date fit well into the calendar of technical preparations to support elections. Bassole stated that Burkina Faso was discussing with the UN Peacekeeping Office (DPKO) a plan to send peacekeeping troops to Cote d'Ivoire to help with pre-election stability. (Note: Embassy learned June 5 that the ONUCI Commander in Abidjan, Beninese General Fernand Amoussou, had requested that 200 Burkinabe peacekeepers replace a Jordanian unit that would be rotating out. End Note.)

¶10. (C) Zimbabwe: Moss and Bassole agreed that the United States and Burkina Faso should closely monitor the situation in Zimbabwe, which could worsen in the coming weeks. They also agreed that an African solution should be found, and that Burkina Faso, as a UNSC member, should take a leading role.

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